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Discussing passive smoking with parents is not always easy. A tool has been developed to equip nurses with the knowledge and confidence to tackle the issue

# Creating smoke-free homes for children

## In this article...

- An overview of the REFRESH *How to Guide*
- How to help parents create a smoke-free home
- Raising awareness of passive smoking with parents

**Authors** April Shaw is senior researcher, Action on Health Scotland; Deborah Ritchie is senior lecturer in health promotion and mental health, School of Health in Social Science, University of Edinburgh; Rachel O'Donnell is policy and research manager, Action on Health Scotland; Amanda Amos is professor of health promotion, UK Centre for Tobacco Control Studies, Centre for Population Health Sciences, University of Edinburgh; Lynsey M Mills is research assistant; Sean E Semple is senior lecturer in environmental and occupational medicine; Stephen W Turner is clinical senior lecturer; Inga S Wilson is research fellow, all at Division of Applied Health Sciences, University of Aberdeen.

**Abstract** Shaw A et al (2013) Creating smoke-free homes for children. *Nursing Times*; 109: 10, 28-30.

This article describes a tool that was designed to help nurses deliver health education on the subject of passive smoking. The tool is based on a Scottish study, which encouraged mothers to identify their own strategies for reducing smoking in the home in order to protect their children from being exposed to second-hand smoke. It is designed to give nurses and other health professionals who work with families and children the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to raise the issue of second-hand smoke with parents and help them to find their own solutions to reducing smoking in the home.

This article also takes into consideration the implications for nursing practice that relate to raising the issue of exposing children to second-hand smoke with parents and carers.

Reducing exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke (SHS, Box 1) is a major health priority for many countries and has led to widespread legislation regarding smoking in public places. Everyone involved in the welfare of children should understand the importance of protecting them from exposure to SHS in the home and in the car.

The home remains an important source of SHS exposure for many children and they are particularly vulnerable to the adverse health effects of it (Royal College of Physicians, 2010). Younger children, and infants in particular, have little control over their environment and are often unable to remove themselves from SHS exposure in the home (Ashley and Ferrence, 1998). Educating parents about the issue is a significant public-health challenge for nurses who work with families. Primary healthcare staff (such as practice nurses and health visitors) and specialist nurses (paediatric and respiratory nurses) are in a prime position to do this.

Children's SHS exposure in the home has been linked to various childhood health problems (RCP, 2010). Children exposed to SHS have an increased risk of respiratory infections, wheeze, asthma, middle-ear disease and sudden infant death syndrome. Those living in disadvantaged areas have the highest levels of SHS exposure, reflecting higher parental smoking rates and fewer restrictions on smoking in the home (Akhtar et al, 2009). While parents wish to protect the health of their children, several qualitative studies have found that social, economic and environmental circumstances can make it difficult for them to reduce SHS exposure in the home (Graham, 2012; Phillips et al, 2007; Robinson

## 5 key points

- 1** Nurses have a key role in reducing children's exposure to second-hand smoke (SHS) by helping parents create a smoke-free home
- 2** Nurses need to recognise the barriers that can prevent parents from stopping smoking around their children
- 3** The key to success lies in empowering parents to find their own solutions to the problem of SHS exposure
- 4** The decisional balance exercise helps people weigh up the pros and cons and come to a sensible decision
- 5** Nurses can draw on their experience to ascertain when parents are likely to be receptive to changing smoking behaviours in the home



Nurses can help cut smoking at home